

# EMBERS OF THE YEAR

## A Thanksgiving Reverie

By W. E. PABOR

Up in the North the snowflakes are beginning to fly, for the embers of the year are here and dear old Mother Earth begins to feel that another cycle of Time is beginning to round up the rolling year.

It is the time for the firelight and the fancies that float in the crimson vapor out from the old-fashioned fireplace. You recall it, dear reader, do you not? The old farm house with its low rooms and dim windows through which sunlight and moonlight sent weird shadows on floor and wall and ceiling?

Outside, the cold wind and the colder snow. Inside, the generous warmth, the flickering flame, the low, sweet voices, the happy, smiling faces—that were and are not.

"Announced by all the trumpets of the sky  
Arrives the snow, and, drifting o'er the fields  
Seems nowhere to alight; the whited air  
Hides and woods, the river and the heavens  
And veils the farmhouse at the garden's end.  
The sled and traveler stopped, the courier's feet  
Delayed, all friends shut out, the house-mates sit  
Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed  
In a tumultuous privacy of snow."

So wrote Emerson, cosily ensconced in his Concord home. Had he lived in Florida, he could not have so written, nor could Longfellow, from whose pen fell this sentence: "How beautiful it was, falling so silently, all day long, all night long, on the mountains, on the meadows, on the roofs of the living, on the graves of the dead."

We of the North, living now in the sunny South are often surfeited with the summer warmth of its winter season and long for the tonic of the frosty air, that braces up and invigorates the human frame. But, looking about our environments we see the roses blooming as though it were June instead of November; we scent the perfume of orange blossoms and Cape Jasamines and Chinest honeysuckles; we listen, not to wonder what the wild winds are whispering, but to the melody of the mocking bird, the chatter of the bluejay, the cooing murmur of the doves, the lap-lap of the woodpecker, the whirr of the partridge, the chatter of the crow; we watch the moonlight send the outline of stately pines and gnarled oaks and twisted cypress on the limpid waters of lake, bay and river; deep, deep down into their very hearts.

And then? While we may miss the mighty mountains, or wide-spreading plains, or darkened woodlands of the East and the West, there rise in our hearts, songs of thankfulness that kind Nature has prepared a rest and nepenthe for hearts wearied of the world; songs that

"Have power to quiet  
The restless pulse of care,  
And come like the benediction  
That follows after prayer."

The embers of the year. Suggestive of so many things that touch our humanity. As we sit, with long silences between our talk, watching the red flame of the pine log leap up the chimney, our reveries are sweet or bitter as our lives have made them. There are words remembered, perchance, that should have gone long ago into the limbo of the forgotten; there are echoes of songs that can never more be sung by the lips that sang them in the Long Ago; there is a fancy that eyes, whose lovelight illumined the pathway of youth or earlier manhood, still shine on as though the darkness that lies on the farther side of the room in which we are sitting—alas! a fancy only; we seem to see the outline of the loving, gentle hand that once rested so contentedly in our own, while the dear head nestled close to a bosom

pulsating with the wine of love flowing through our veins.

All these, to our present sorrow.

"And the stately ships go on  
To the haven under the hill,  
But, oh! for the touch of a vanished hand  
And the sound of a voice that is still."

How many of our readers are there to whom such memories come when the embers of the year are upon them; one more of those years, following years that, in the words of Pope

"Steal something every day  
Then steal us from ourselves away?"

But let us be thankful that our fancies of the firelight are not wholly of shadows or grey in color. There flash out rosy rays, full of the brightness of remembered joys that dot the roadside as wild roses border country lanes. Then it is we think of dear Ike Marvel who, a half century ago delighted the youth and the maid, ay! the man grown and the matron, with his Dream Life and Reveries of a Bachelor, that are to-day as fascinating as when they first appeared within the green cover pages of Putnam's Magazine. "Over a Wood Fire." Do you recall the reverie? In the realm of sentiment these two books are classics and to-day Donald G. Mitchell must feel a sense of satisfaction over success such as few writers feel, who in this day write mainly for money's sake.

I am reminded of it by seeing in Adam's Magazine for September, the whole chapter published. The copyright having expired it is, of course, open to all to print when and where they will; but it is an act of clear injustice to so filch such treasures of sentiment.

There was, first—Smoke, signifying doubt; then Blaze—signifying cheer; then Ashes—signifying desolation. On these three strings of human thought his facile fingers fell with loving tenderness, yielding notes that were jubilant with joy, until the blaze died out into the requiem of sorrow.

Then the rosy embers changed to a dull grey as the darkness deepened, showing more clearly in the dim lamplight. So they are embers other than those of the year. Embers of Hope and Happiness, of Love and Life—grief and gladness—until the vital spark expires.

But—does it expire, or only change its prison to a palace, in that unknown country to which all who are human are bound? On Thanksgiving Day, all over this broad land there will be sermons preached in praise of prosperity and present happiness. But there will be many to whom prosperity and happiness have not come and they will sigh for the peace that passeth understanding and the solace of silence that comes when lips close to open no more in speech.

When the sun shines, there are always shadows, somewhere; so, when the firelight glows, they fall as well on vacant chairs and darkened corners. The embers are crimson for awhile and then, grey ashes remain.

My reverie is ended.

The employees of the L. & N. are loud in their praises of the liberal treatment of the company during the quarantine. Not only were those who had to stay outside that city boarded free by the company, and every possible arrangement made for their comfort, but those whose pay depends upon the mileage run received pay for the eighteen miles between the relay camp and Pensacola. Is it any wonder that the boys swear by the "old man," as Superintendent Salt Marsh is affectionately termed?—The Breeze (DeFuniak.)

The city will soon be overrun with men from the northward hunting a job. It is a mistake for a white man to think he can come down here and do common negro labor, keep a family and run an automobile on the proceeds.—Orlando Reporter.

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